

The LANTERN

A newsletter of the Presentation Lantern Center

Presentation Lantern Center to Relocate this Summer

*Elizabeth Kelsey, Telegraph Herald reporter
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A Dubuque nonprofit serving immigrants will move to a new home this summer.

Presentation Lantern Center, currently located in Schmid Innovation Center at 900 Jackson St., will move to a space within Mount Loretto, the Carter Road motherhouse of Dubuque's Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

The move represents something of a homecoming for the Lantern Center, which was founded by the Presentation sisters in 2002.

“Our sponsorship of their ministry is very close to our hearts,” said Sister Mary Lou Specha, a member of the congregational leadership team. “We know what the climate is for immigrants today, and part of our charism of radical hospitality calls us to open our hearts and open our doors and have space to welcome all.”

The Lantern Center pairs learners with mentors who help them study English, prepare for U.S. citizenship exams and learn practical skills. Since its launch, the nonprofit has served more than 2,500 immigrants from 85 countries.

The center was first housed in the rectory of the former Saint Mary's Catholic Church and had several homes before settling in Schmid Innovation Center in 2014.

Lantern Center Executive Director Megan Ruiz said the space has suited the center well, but as the nonprofit's staff, students and programming have expanded, they've found themselves outgrowing the space.

The new 2,000-square-foot location at Mount Loretto will offer more classroom and storage space, a bigger children's area and five offices rather than two, plus access to an adjacent parking lot.

It will take up two floors of space that formerly housed administrative offices for the Presentation sisters. Those employees moved to a different space within the motherhouse several months ago. Renovations to prepare the new space are underway, and Lantern Center officials plan to move in this summer.

Ruiz described the motherhouse as an ideal, centrally-located spot for the Lantern Center's learners, with two nearby city bus stops and several apartment complexes within walking distance.

Of the center's 60 to 80 weekly students, only three or four indicated on a survey that the new location might present a transportation problem, and the tutors for those students quickly offered to drive them to sessions.

Both Ruiz and the Presentation sisters hope the Lantern Center's new home will foster deeper connections between the congregation and nonprofit, whether that means sharing snacks and hosting holiday parties or increased volunteer opportunities for sisters who cannot easily leave the motherhouse. *(continued on page 3)*



Above: Carmen Hernandez, PBVM, congregational leader of the Presentation Sisters, shared the exciting news of our upcoming move for the first time with guests at our sold-out Lighting the Lantern event on March 19.

A Family Torn Apart



Megan Ruiz
Executive Director

Here is one family's story—one of over a thousand heartbreaking stories of detention and deportation in Iowa.

Michael is a young man from the tri-state area and a brave member of the U.S. military. Last summer, while stationed far away, he learned that one of his family's worst nightmares had

come true. His father David had been pulled over, detained and yanked overnight to one of Iowa's nine county jails that contract with ICE. Michael's father David came to the U.S. as a child, more than 30 years ago. He risked his life, crossing the desert alone in search of safety and a way to supplement his family's income. He built a life in the tri-state area and lived here peacefully with no criminal record. In 2025, he was deported, after months of imprisonment, leaving behind his three kids.

This family's story is heartbreaking but sadly not unique. Currently, more than 6.3 million U.S. citizen children live in households where one or more of their parents have no pathway to legal residency.

100 Women Who Care ~ First Quarter Recipient!

The Lantern Center is grateful for a \$12,000 donation from Women Who Care members in support of our financial assistance fund. Their generosity will help provide critical necessities for hardworking individuals facing temporary financial challenges. This donation offers stability, dignity and hope when it is needed most.



From Tutor to Trustee ~ Liz Kruse Joins Our Board

Liz became involved with the Lantern Center as a tutor while she was a student at Loras College in the mid-2000s prior to studying and living briefly in Spain. She has been working in higher education in a variety of areas since 2010 from Alumni Relations and International Student Services/Education Abroad to Graduate Studies, Adult Education, and IT. She now works remotely for Grinnell College as an IT Project Manager and is excited to return to serve at the Lantern Center as a board member.

FSPA Grant has Huge Impact!

We are grateful to the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration for their generous grant in support of our financial assistance fund. The fund helps immigrants maintain stability and avoid cycles of debt. Their extraordinary commitment ensures that individuals can meet essential needs while remaining focused on work, school and building a better future. This investment provides critical support at pivotal moments and helps prevent short-term hardships from becoming lasting obstacles.

One student shared, "I am truly grateful for the support to help finance my car. Having reliable transportation means so much as a single mom. It lifted a financial burden and gave me stability and peace of mind. Your generosity is making a real difference in my life and motivates me to keep working toward my goals. Thank you for your support."

Refugees and immigrants are vital to our communities and our economy. While no person's worth can be measured in dollars, it is worth noting that all refugees and immigrants (undocumented and documented) pay over \$635 billion in taxes each year—while remaining ineligible to access most federal services.



(stock photo)

Over the past 16 months, more than two million people have had their work permit or immigration status changed or revoked without notice, leaving families vulnerable to ICE and extortion. Our small emergency fund, made possible with community support, provides assistance with application fees and some basic necessities. For families like Michael's, the Lantern Center's friendship, language support and an occasional, temporary lifeline make an immeasurable difference. Thank you for helping people feel welcome, to improve their English and feel a sense of belonging.

Megan

Lighting the Lantern Shines at Capacity!

On March 19, Lighting the Lantern brought together a record number of guests, a powerful reflection of our community's growing commitment to our mission and support for our immigrant neighbors.

We were honored to welcome back keynote speaker Alex Baum, director of advocacy, data and learning at the Community Foundation of Greater Dubuque. "Immigrant communities remain critically important for how Dubuque is able to thrive," he said. Even amid the uncertainties facing immigrants nationwide, his message pointed to hope grounded in local action and shared commitment. "I'm heartened to see how much Dubuquers have been doing in a year that has been hard and frightening for many. It's why I take such inspiration from the work of the Lantern Center, and from Postville, and from communities like in Minnesota that I've seen around the country."

He closed by recognizing the everyday efforts shaping a stronger, more welcoming community. "The people of our region have been forging friendships and providing care, and in doing so, are helping bring into existence the kind of world they want to live in."



Above right: Event speakers included Board President Craig Takes, Heather Trees and Alex Baum. Above: Presentation Sisters and Associates filled three tables at our sold-out Lighting the Lantern event, reflecting their deep commitment to our mission. (Photo credit: Emily Shedek)

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(cont. from page 1) "Cultural diversity only enriches our lives, because we're learning from each other's values and prayer styles and traditions ... and the building of relationships is a main point of any ministry," said Congregational Leadership Team Member Carmen Hernandez. Ruiz agreed. "I'm excited to share the space with the people who started it all," she said. "They're just such a warm, supportive, caring group of people that have wrapped their arms around our mission."

The Lantern Center is deeply grateful to the Sisters of the Presentation for this incredible opportunity and for their continued support.



PRESENTATION
**LANTERN
CENTER**

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www.thelanterncenter.org

MISSION

The Presentation Lantern Center offers hospitality, educational opportunities and advocacy to adult immigrants who are striving to better their lives.

HOURS

Monday, Wednesday, Friday:
10 AM–3 PM
Tuesdays and Thursdays: 1–7 PM

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OUR TEAM

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Sara Millhouse
Business Coordinator
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VISIT US AT

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We are truly grateful to our community for their incredible support! Gifts received from 11/5/25 to 4/15/26.

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